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LB 1059, 1172

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. President and members. I want to review with you again a little bit the procedure in committee. We...Senator Kristensen mentioned his bill was one of the many bills, I think eight altogether, that we considered in coming up with this proposal. His bill was among seven that was killed by the committee. He...I want to I guess do a couple three things: respond a little bit to what he has mentioned, and his viewpoint is certainly well-taken and I appreciate him doing that; his objections to what we've done in the committee amendment; and then also talk a little bit about what this particular bill or the amendment that he offers, which was once LB 1059, if you want to look it up. First off, the argument that there is no direction, the committee could have said that no fees will be allowed. That's simply not going to be...the committee chose not to do that. Now the committee, I think as Senator Wickersham pointed out, did recognize that there are certain limits as to what the constitution allows, to what statute allows, and there is an area of discretion with which a school district can operate and can devise a fee policy to its own needs and desires and what it feels adapts well to the circumstances in its...in its local situation. The other thing I would mention is that...and Senator Kristensen mentioned in his comments the direction to schools, and which I agree is important. One of the issues that we can't lose sight of that the committee paid a great deal attention to is what about the students? What about the student that has no income, has no cash money to pay to participate in a public education? What is it we want to provide for that student? And I think it's very important or the committee's view was it's very important that we protect the educational opportunity of that student. To an extent, and I am very hopefully open about this, our feeling is that in public education fewer fees are preferred to more fees. You have a number of school systems, maybe not a number, but one or two here and there that I'm sure would prefer that the Legislature endorse whatever fee policy they happen to have in place at the time. That fee policy may address the financial needs of that particular school very well. It may or may not address the needs of that income challenged student which I think, as a policy matter, we have to be very concerned about in...in whatever signals, if you will, that we send to schools